

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

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AMEMBASSY COPENHAGEN
AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMEMBASSY LUXEMBOURG
AMEMBASSY PARIS
AMEMBASSY ROME
AMEMBASSY THE HAGUE

C O N F I D E N T I A L DUBLIN 00458

USEEC ALSO FOR EMBASSY

EO:11652: GDS
TAGS: PEPR, PINS, EI
SUBJECT: NATO MEMBERSHIP FOR IRELAND?

1. DURING LAST WEEKEND'S ANNUAL CONVENTION OF IRELAND'S
RULING PARTY, FIANNA FAIL, A RESOLUTION WAS PROPOSED RE-
QUESTING A STATEMENT FROM THE PARTY'S LEADERS CONCERNING
"JOINING NATO, THE COMMON DEFENSE POLICY OF THE EEC, AND
THE ALIGNMENT WITH NEUTRAL STATES."

2. IN THE PREPARED TEXT OF HIS REPLY TO THE QUESTION,
FOREIGN MINISTER O'KENNEDY SIDESTEPED THE QUESTION ABOUT
NATO: "MEMBERSHIP OF THE EUROPEAN COMMUNITY DOES NOT
INVOLVE ANY MILITARY COMMITMENTS WHATSOEVER FOR IRELAND
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AND THE MATTER HAS NEVER ARISEN DURING OUR MEMBERSHIP OF
THE COMMUNITY."

3. HOWEVER, IN AN OFF-THE-CUFF STATEMENT AMPLIFYING THE
WRITTEN TEXT O'KENNEDY SAID THAT IRELAND HAS NOT BEEN
ASKED OR PRESSURED TO BE A MEMBER OF NATO AND "IRELAND WILL
NOT BE A MEMBER OF NATO." HE THEN WENT ON TO SAY THAT "IF

IT EVER DID GET TO THE POINT, SOMETIME IN THE FUTURE, THAT THE EUROPEAN ECONOMIC COMMUNITY WAS BEING ATTACKED, THEN WE, AS MEMBERS OF THAT COMMUNITY, COULD NOT NEGATE THE FACT. AS MEMBERS OF THE EEC, WE WOULD HAVE TO PLAY OUR ROLE AND CARRY OUT OUR OBLIGATIONS RESPONSIBLY."

4. AFTER HIS SPEECH TO THE ASSEMBLED FAITHFUL, O'KENNEDY HURRIED TO THE PRESS BOX AND EXPLAINED PRIVATELY TO THE AMBASSADOR WHO WAS OBSERVING THE CONVENTION, THAT HE HOPED THE USG WOULD NOT GET THE WRONG IMPRESSION FROM HIS REMARKS. HE HAD BEEN RESPONDING PRINCIPALLY, HE SAID, TO VARIOUS RECENT JOURNALISTIC SALLIES WHICH HAD ACCUSED HIM OF BEING "SOFT" ON NEUTRALITY -- THESE, HE SAID, HE BELIEVES TO HAVE BEEN "INSPIRED" (COMMENT: BY THE SOVIET EMBASSY), BUT THEY HAVE AROUSED CONSIDERABLE OLD FIANNA FAIL FEELING -- THE DEVALERA POLICY OF NEUTRALITY AND AVOIDANCE OF NATO IS STILL A POWERFUL ARTICLE OF FAITH. HE FELT HE HAD TO REITERATE "TRADITIONAL" POLICY, BUT WANTED US TO UNDERSTAND THAT IRELAND WAS STILL WITH THE WEST, AND HIS REMARKS ON "EUROPEAN" SECURITY WERE INTENDED TO EMPHASIZE THIS ORIENTATION.

5. COMMENT: ALTHOUGH O'KENNEDY'S EXPLANATION TO US IS OF INTEREST, IT SEEMS APPARENT THAT ANY SLIGHT TENDENCY FOR FIANNA FAIL, AND THUS THE GOI, TO GET CLOSER TO CONSIDERING JOINING THE ATLANTIC ALLIANCE HAS BEEN SHELVED FOR THE NEAR CONFIDENTIAL

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FUTURE. SOME OF THE YOUNGER LEADERS, LIKE O'KENNEDY, HAVE BEEN STUDYING THE POSSIBILITIES AND RAMIFICATIONS OF IRISH MEMBERSHIP RATHER FAVORABLY, BUT IT IS APPARENT THAT NONE OF THEM CONSIDER THE POLITICAL CLIMATE RIPE TO PUSH THE MATTER. AS WE HAVE RECENTLY STATED IN OUR COMMENTS ON THE GOALS AND OBJECTIVES PAPER FOR IRELAND (DUBLIN 349), WE ALSO SEE NO ADVANTAGE TO BE GAINED BY PUSHING THE MATTER AT THIS TIME. SHANNON

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